PROMOTING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT: A ROAD TO ENHANCE LITERACY SKILLS IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH IN LATINO FAMILIES

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by
Flor Othomy Castillo Moreno

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Advisor: Paula Wilder

Abstract

The fast-growing Latino population in our community leads us to look for ways to support them in equitable ways. Family and education are both crucial agents of socialization for children regardless of gender, race or ethnicity. These two institutions instruct children in what they need to know in order to function in society as integral and successful adults. This two-session parent workshop in Spanish provides a research based outline of the importance of parental involvement as well as helpful guidelines to enhance family literacy in their Native tongue as well as in English.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Gladys Marina Moreno and Adolfo Felix Castillo Escoto, fundamental pillars of my life and education, as well as my son Edward for being my unique source of inspiration to better myself each day. My deepest appreciation is to my husband, Rob, for his unfailing support and giving me the courage to pursue my dreams.

Acknowledgements

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Table of Contents

Page

Title Page i

Abstract ii

Dedication iii

Acknowledgement iv

Table of Contents v

Chapters

Chapter 1: Introduction 1

Chapter 2: Literature Review 5

Chapter 3: Project Design 17

Chapter 4: The Project 20

Chapter 5: Conclusion 31

Appendix 34

References 43

Chapter 1: Introduction

I come from a family of Honduran educators, and I was surrounded by uncles, aunts, and cousins who were teachers. During our vacations together we were always reading books and telling stories. Additionally, my grandmother grew up on one of the Bay Islands of Honduras, colonized by the British; therefore, a main language there was English. My father and his siblings knew how to speak English, and I always looked forward to meeting my grandmother, aunts, and uncles to show off my own English language skills. Growing up, I had the privilege of attending one of the first American Schools in Honduras and learned English as a second language. For me, being able to attend this bilingual school from grades K-12 was life changing, and it opened so many doors of opportunity for me as both a student and professional. In school and at home, learning was valued. Literacy in my family was essential. I was read to and encouraged to read and retell stories and my scholar years began early. At 4 years old, I was already attending a Spanish pre-school, and at 5 years old an English Immersion Kindergarten.

Given my background, it is no surprise that I am currently beginning my 28th year as an educator. Throughout my career, I have taught preschool through high school in my home country of Honduras. I devoted twenty-four years of my teaching career to being an English teacher to students who were also learning English as a second language. The last four years I have been teaching here in the United States as a Spanish immersion teacher. Although I love my time in the classroom with my own students, I also feel compelled to help students who are learning English as a second language. My life experience learning English in school and my years of teaching have set the path for my future goals. Culturally and linguistically diverse

(CLD) students and their families are the main reason I am taking this master's program. My goal is to continue being an advocate for students who are learning English as a second language and their families.

Four years ago, I had the opportunity to start the Spanish Immersion program at a Title 1 school in central North Carolina. At this school more than 50% of the students are Black, Latino, and/or Native American. The data from the National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education (2017) has shown that the most common non-English language spoken in the United States is Spanish. This is reflected in the district where I work as the Latino population in our school keeps growing each year. Thus, it is imperative to find resources to guide these families and their scholars.

As I settled into my new school, I noticed that in the evenings, usually after school, one teacher in particular was often called to the office. When I finally met her, she explained that she was from Chile and they often needed her interpreting services at the front desk. Immediately, I made sure to let my principal and colleagues know that I was also available if they needed interpreting or translating communication. During the last four years that I have been at my school, the need for interpreting services has grown. While providing these services for the school, I have encountered a vital need to guide and support, not only our CLD students, but their families too. Family members' limited and sometimes non-existent English proficiency often prevents them from becoming more actively engaged in their children's education. They lack not only the language skills to help their scholars, but also the right support system. Unfortunately, most of the time these parents are perceived as uninterested and unsupportive by their children's teachers.

CLD students and their families struggle due to their limited English proficiency, their socioeconomic status, and their previous academic experiences. These are important because contextual influences on the CLD student can hinder or facilitate their second language acquisition. If we consider Spanish as their primary discourse language, the emergent literacy stages to develop English can be negatively impacted before they enroll in school. An example of this is the case study of an Appalachian boy in the book *Other People's Words* by Purcell-Gates (1995). Donny's parents were both illiterate. Therefore, he was raised with no exposure to read-alouds or printed texts. Through this book, we get a clear view of how low literacy in non-literate families can become a cycle. Family and culture can allow some people to live comfortably without literacy; however, this book does allow us to understand the influence of family and culture in our literacy world. Purcell-Gates (1995) also provided us with a clear perspective on the importance of time in literacy. We cannot keep promoting students that do not know how to read. The chances that they learn how to read diminishes in the upper grades.

During the last school year, I experienced a similar situation with a single parent Latino family and their 9-year-old-son. I helped interpret for the father when we enrolled his son at our school. The family did not speak English and had very basic writing skills. The father told me that his son lived with him only and that his mom lived out of state. Unfortunately, they had moved between states twice and the father was really worried about his son's education. Despite not being able to help his son himself, he was at the school seeking help.

Parental involvement and family literacy play a crucial role in language acquisition and development. However, there can be a gap between home-based family literacy and school-based literacy expectations. This two-session parent workshop in Spanish will bridge that gap and aid Hispanic immigrant families in our school and help them learn and understand the importance of

parental involvement and its positive effects on a student's academic success. It includes a thorough review of family literacy and how it helps to promote language development. My workshop also includes a list of technology resources for English language learners, a complete guide to ESL services, and a clear pathway to effectively communicate with the school's administrators and teachers.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Family and education are both crucial agents of socialization for children, regardless of gender, race, or ethnicity. These two institutions instruct children in what they need to know to function in society as successful adults. Parental involvement is important to students' academic success in Hispanic communities, and there are many issues related to Hispanic family involvement in their children's schools including family literacy, available technological resources to support English language learners and their families, ways to improve communication, and ESL services. Research into these factors serves as the theoretical framework for developing a two-session workshop for parents and guardians of students who are learning English as a second language.

ESL Latino Population

When English language learners share their culture, nationality, and language with the classroom it creates a diverse environment. These learners also contribute to the educational benefits in the cognitive, social, and emotional areas enjoyed by all the students they interact with. As reported by The National Center of Education Statistics within the US Department of Education (2017), there are more than 4.8 million English learners (EL) across the country and the vast majority are Latinos. More than 75% of all EL students are Latino and according to statistics, Spanish is the most common non-English language spoken by ELs in the United States of America, followed by Arabic, Chinese, and Vietnamese (US Department of Education, 2017). Overall, EL students constitute a majority of the students in many classrooms while facing

unique challenges; however, these students can become a crucial asset if they can realize their full potential (US Department of Education, 2017). The fast-growing Latino population in our community led us to look for ways to support them in equitable ways.

Parental Involvement

Studies have shown that the involvement of parents in their children's education leads to positive effects for the entire school community. Karther and Lowden, (1997 as cited in Cassity & Harris, 2000) identified student achievement gains, increased parent self-confidence, satisfaction with schools, and overall school improvement as benefits of parental involvement. Additionally, Gettinger and Guetschow (1998 as cited in Cassity & Harris, 2000) associate parental involvement with increases in children's achievement test scores and grades, higher school attendance rates, lower drop-out rates, and improvement in student motivation, attitudes, classroom behavior and self-esteem. Parent involvement in a child's early education is consistently found to be positively associated with a child's academic performance (Hara & Burke, 1998; Hill & Craft, 2003; Marcon, 1999; Stevenson & Baker, 1987 as cited in Black, 2022). Parents who are involved in school activities, such as parent-teacher conferences, are part of the PTO (Parent-teacher Organization) and who attend back-to-school events are most likely to have children who perform well academically (Black, 2022).

Clearly, the influence of parental involvement in children's academic success is significant; thus, it is necessary to create strong family and school relationships. However, for many schools, participation from parents of limited English proficiency (LEP) students remains low (Cassity & Harris, 2000). We can attribute this low participation to the lack of viable communication between the school and parents, and teachers and parents. The language barrier

often marks this gap more than the lack of communication. Language barriers are a major reason why immigrant and refugee parents are less engaged in their children's schooling (Anthony-Newman, 2017; Tadesse, 2014; Tarasawa & Waggoner, 2015 as cited in Cureton, 2020). Understanding the reasons why the parents of LEP students are unwilling to participate actively in school related activities is crucial to finding feasible solutions to overcome these barriers. Researchers have found several barriers that hinder parental involvement. These barriers include time constraints, inflexible work schedules, prior negative experiences with school teachers and administrators, and transportation difficulties (Cureton, 2020). Also, LEP parents know when teachers and/or administrators are uneasy talking to them because of the language barrier. It is imperative that administrators create a relationship with parents that is inviting and based on trust and respect.

To address this issue, one must first understand the guiding theoretical framework for parental involvement. Epstein (1987, 1992, 1994 as cited in Fan & Chen, 2001) suggested a widely recognized typology to account for different levels of parental involvement in their children's education. In her early studies Epstein (1987 as cited in Fan & Chen, 2001) identified four types of parental involvement in schools: (1) basic obligations (2) school-to-home communications (3) parent involvement at schools, and (4) parent involvement in learning activities at home. In her most recent investigations Epstein (1992, 1994 as cited in Fan & Chen, 2001) expanded the typology and defined six levels (types) of school related opportunities for parental involvement: (1) assisting parents in child-rearing skills, (2) school-parent communication, (3) involving parents in school volunteer opportunities, (4) involving parents in home-based learning, (5) involving parents in school decision-making, and (6) involving parents in school-community collaborations. Epstein's (1992) views about parental involvement are

focused mainly on what the school and the teachers can do to promote effective and constant involvement.

Complementing Epstein's theoretical framework of parental involvement, Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005 as cited in Hine, 2022) identified the importance of invitations from the schools, teachers, and students in signaling to parents that their involvement is welcomed. These invitations facilitate parent involvement in various ways. The invitation can come directly from the child to the parents, inviting them to an event, or it may originate from the school through a teacher inviting a parent to volunteer to read for the class. General invitations for parent involvement from the school create a welcoming school environment and effectively publicize school events to parents and are examples to support families (Walker et al., 2005; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler; 2007 as cited by Cureton, 2020). Though defined in various ways, family engagement is commonly categorized into school-based, home-based, and community-based engagement (Epstein et al., 2019; Fantuzzo, et al., 2004; Grolnick & Słowiaczek, 1994; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005 as cited in Hine, 2022). School-based engagement is the type most traditionally associated with home-based engagement (Sanders et al., 2002 as cited in Hine, 2002). This type of involvement includes doing homework with a child, participating in school activities, attending conferences and belonging to the PTO/PTA (Parent-Teacher Association or Organization).

In addition, school administrators and staff should facilitate family orientations and periodic check-ins with families to ensure students' academic success (Cureton, 2020). Schools should provide families with a welcoming environment in which they feel comfortable. Furthermore, an interpreter should be made available and written information that is in both English and Spanish should be provided, to bridge the language and cultural gap (Morrison &

Bryan, 2014; Tamer, 2014; Teaching Tolerance, 2013; Williams and Butler, 2003; as cited in Cureton, 2020).

Expanding family involvement is a challenge for schools and increasing the participation of Latino families is even more difficult. Shiffman (2019) stated that through interactions, educators and families exchange information, understand the priorities and perspectives of one another, and forge relationships that support a child's learning and well-being. Home communication can be viewed as a one-way to two-way trajectory. Newsletters, websites, automated calls, and mass emails are inherently one-way flows of information (Graham-Clay, 2005; Heath et al., 2015 as cited in Shiffman, 2019). Formal school presentations can also easily shift to a one directional communication event, especially if the information is only provided without allowing input from the audience. Parent teacher conferences and individual meetings with the principal or other school staff, hold a greater potential for two-way communication between the parties involved (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003 as cited in Shiffman, 2019).

Current studies facilitate guides for school leaders to maintain two-way communication, with families getting to know the school's strengths and creating supportive relationships. Breiseth et al. (2015) proposed that educators should learn about the English language learner population, integrating cultural traditions throughout the school, creating welcoming environments, making personal connections with the families, and showing that the school values families' native languages. Once this information is acquired, schools may build a foundation which can be used to match students to appropriate programs or services (Breiseth et al., 2015).

Further studies have shown the effects of school programs and government acts that intend to organize parents to increase active involvement in children's education. When "No

Child Left Behind" became the mantra of federal education officials, it was touted as a way to empower parents to ensure their children received a good education (Teicher, 2007). If the school failed to fulfill students' educational needs, parents had the right to transfer their children or request tutoring services. Parents also have full access to their child's grades and the overall information about the district's performance (Teicher, 2007). Many viewed the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act as a promising educational reform which intended to improve parental involvement. Others, in contrast, described the NCLB as a misguided enactment whose foundation is unproven change strategies (McKenzie, 2003 as cited in Simpson et al., 2004).

Another way to increase parent involvement is to provide them with ways to communicate effectively through the use of technology gadgets that promise to bridge the language barrier. There is an increasing request for mobile utilization to sustain our day-to-day events and offer diverse amusement (Papadakis & Kalogiannakis, 2017 as cited in Ogonduken et al., 2021). Smartphones are recognized as the most used mobile devices able to perform advanced computer functions, capturing images, and recording high quality videos. Furthermore, smartphones provide their users with computer-like functionality, including internet access (Kim et al., 2014 as cited in Metruk, 2021). Many of these phone applications can translate from text to text, from speech to text and vice versa, and most importantly from speech to speech for the visually impaired (Ogonduken et al., 2021). Similarly, Lahoti et al. (2018 as cited in Ogonduken et al., 2021) developed and introduced an android based framework that translates American Sign Language to text that can be used anywhere. This application uses pictures to then translate into the speech of the preferred language.

Family Literacy

Young children begin to learn literacy before they go through formal schooling and parents are a child's first teachers and the foundations of family literacy. Not only does the family determine the child's early language, but a family's culture, beliefs and traditions also influence the way children use words for discourse (Heath, 1983 as cited in Wasik, 2012). The context young children are brought up with also shapes their literacy development and influences the field of early literacy. There are two perspectives through which we can view family literacy according to Wasik (2012). First, a family literacy perspective is Neo-Vygostkian, recognizing that children learn from their interactions with others and describing the importance of interactions between parents and children, and peers and siblings to the family literacy perspective (Rogoff, 1990 as cited in Wasik, 2012). Second, another family literacy perspective is Neo-Piagetian which emphasizes that children discover and learn about literacy through their own attempts at reading and writing (Clay, 1966; Ferreiro 1986 as cited in Wasik, 2012). This perspective supports the idea that children discover literacy on their own through pretending to read and story-telling (Wasik, 2012). In the third category is the notion of parents as models of reading, which is well-anchored in a social learning perspective whereby a young child's behavior is affected or modified by observing parents' literate acts (Bandura, 1986 as cited in Wasik, 2012). This perspective clearly states that parents act as role models and children will imitate their literate acts such as reading and writing (Wasik, 2012). Reading aloud to young children, which has an undeniable effect on young children's vocabulary acquisition, oral language development and attitudes towards reading, is one of the best ways that families can support early literacy (Neuman et al., 2000; Trelease, 2001 as cited in Hill-Clark, 2005). Lastly, Purcell-Gates (1995) affirmed that children's literacy abilities are learned through observation

and engagement in everyday activities, such as observing a mother reading a book or writing a note. This early stage of literacy is also known as emergent literacy and may vary depending on the child's cultural background and context (Purcell-Gates, 1995). Peregoy and Boyle (2005) stated that students must have the opportunity to write for real reasons. English learners benefit from writing activities that are authentic and have personal value. When they write about their personal lives better results are achieved.

According to Passel (2011), by the year 2050, immigrant youth will make up one-third of the more than 100 million children in the United States. The rapidly growing population of EL learners throughout the nation calls for an understanding of the early stages of literacy in bilingual environments. An understanding of the current facts that need to be addressed immediately helps to illustrate this need. The highest growth of English language learners has occurred in grades 7-12 with a staggering 70% between the years of 1992 and 2002 (NCTE, 2008). The number of school aged children immigrants increased from 12.3 million to 17.9 million in 2020 (NCTE, 2008). The data from the National Center for Education Statistics, US Department of Education, (2017) showed that the most common non-English language spoken in the United States is Spanish. Nevertheless, the discourse used at home by Latinos with their families and close relatives may differ from the discourse used outside of the familial context. Discourse refers to, not only words, but also thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, deeds, and values (Gee, 2001 as cited in Mays, 2008). These characteristics also influence parental involvement in school related activities and the children's language preferences. Parents and/or guardians often prefer not to get involved in school activities due to limitations in English proficiency (Mays, 2008). Unfortunately, these students will be placed in mainstream classrooms with little to no support in their second language (L2).

Family literacy programs emerged intentionally to enhance the literacy skills of all family members. In such programs, children's caregivers are brought together to work on their own literacy, sometimes separately from their children, and sometimes together with them (Nutbrown et al., 2005; Timmons, 2008 as cited in Parry et al., 2014). For example, the federal Early Head Start (EHS) program was initiated in 1995 as support for low-income pregnant women and families with infants aged three and younger (Wasik, 2012). EHS has several goals that are directly relevant to family literacy, including helping parents spend more time with their children in activities that stimulate their children's development and helping children demonstrate improved communication, language, and emergent literacy skills (Wasik, 2012). This program showed positive outcomes in parent engagement and child outcomes.

Even Start (ES), a federal supported literacy program providing early childhood education, parenting education, and joint parent-child literacy activities to children and parents from low-literate families (St Pierre et al., 2005). The ES program followed 463 families for 2 years and implemented family literacy activities including both joint and separate activities (St Pierre et al., 2005)). Parents who participated in this literacy program were engaged in activities where they had to read to their children and listen when their child read to them. The study concluded that ES were able to properly implement family literacy programs, and the observed lack of effectiveness was attributed to lack of participation and ineffective instructional services (St Pierre et al., 2005).

Other studies focused on book reading interventions as part of the literacy programs. When parents were introduced to dialogic reading through guided workshops, the dialogic reading improved the linguistic development of children in comparison with children with no such experiences (Hargrave & Senechal, 2000; Huebner, 2000; Lever & Senechal, 2011 as cited

in Niklas & Schneider, 2015). This study proved the positive effects of dialogic reading interventions.

Technology to Support Hispanic/Latino Families

Home-school relations and parental involvement are associated with school success; therefore, understanding how educators are communicating with Hispanic/Latino families and how the families respond is crucial. Social networking services (SNS) such as Seesaw, are viewed as promising communication tools. Moreno et al. (2013) wrote "Social networking sites provide users with an interactive multimedia experience, including the ability to create a personal profile, communicate with other profile owners and link profiles via 'friending.'" (Moya, 2021). Social media is part of what we know as Web 2.0 applications and describes a group of technological tools that facilitates interactive information among users and allows users to create content and collaborate (Elefant, 2011 as cited in Moya, 2021). Seesaw is used by teachers to communicate with parents by creating portfolios with videos, pictures, and real time input on the activities their children participate in.

Likewise, ClassDojo, created in 2011, is an educational platform with a mission to "bring communities together and give them the tools, ideas, and energy to improve education for all kids" (www.classdojo.com). The features include a points system to facilitate classroom management, instant teacher-parent communication (on the individual or class level), and student portfolios among others (Digiacomo et al., 2022). ClassDojo has improved its features offering translations in 36 different languages which facilitates communication between teachers and parents bridging the language gap. Teachers can send a message in English through the platform, and parents at home can view it in English or the language of their choice. Similarly, parents can

send a message in the language of their choice and the teacher can view it in English (Digiacomo et al., 2022). Both technological resources help to improve school-home communication when used as indicated. It is necessary to note that these SNSs do not intend to replace the job of certified interpreters to provide direct communication, especially during parent-teacher conferences as proposed by Digiacomo et al. (2022).

ESL Services

The role of the English as a second language (ESL) teacher, whose designated responsibility is to promote the school success of emergent bilinguals, is much more complex than simply delivering the right strategies or the most recent theory-based language instruction (Garrone-Shufran, 2022). Because emergent bilinguals still face barriers in accessing equitable educational opportunities in public schools, ESL teachers must assume the role of advocate (Linville, 2016 as cited in Garrone-Shufran, 2022). The role of an ESL teacher is fundamental as they become a representative of the students they serve. Typically, the ESL programming and content models are implemented in a self-contained classroom, and the timeframe is usually for the whole day. Next, ESL pull-out models require auxiliary classrooms and several teachers for varying periods of time during the school day and, therefore, are expensive and the least effective of the models (Collier & Thomas, 2009; Crawford, 1997; Thomas & Collier, 1997, 2002, 2004, 2012 as cited in Garrone-Shufran, 2022)

Effective ESL programs must meet a number of criteria to ensure that students comprehend instruction and are able to be successful in content-area and language learning. To achieve this effectiveness, ESL instruction should be intentionally grounded in grade-level

content-area curriculum (Herrera & Murray, 2016). Additionally, school educators must receive adequate professional development to deliver appropriately restricted instruction that scaffolds or shelters the curriculum to ensure comprehension, learning, and application (Herrera et al., 2008 as cited in Herrera & Murray, 2016). Finally, authentic alternative assessments are crucial to the measurement of both process and product gains in language, acculturation, and content-area learning among culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students (Herrera & Murray, 2016). Most importantly, the main focus of ESL programs is language and literacy development in a way that they are integrated with content-area instruction within the mainstream classroom.

Conclusion

Families and schools play an important role in children's education; therefore, they must work together to ensure students receive the necessary instruction to function as successful adults. Many of the issues that hinder parental involvement among Latino families include family literacy, available technological resources to support English language learners and their families, ineffective ways of communication, and ESL services that fail to support CLD students. Finally, parental involvement can be nurtured through the understanding of these issues, and by developing successful partnerships that focus on home-school collaboration.

Chapter 3: Project

In this chapter, I explain the rationale behind a parent workshop for Latino families to enhance parental involvement and reinforce family literacy in K-2 students. Although it may seem that students spend more time at school, data shows that 70% of student's time is spent at home (Michigan Department of Education, 2001 as cited in Robertson, 2019), which means that students whose parents are actively involved in their education regardless of their income or background achieve higher grades and test scores, pass their classes, have better social skills, and graduate (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory Robertson, 2019). Therefore, encouraging greater parent involvement can help address the achievement gap between high literacy and low literacy Latino families.

For the reasons stated above, and regardless of the Latino families' socio-economic background, my intention is to provide parents of ESL students with a variety of tools and resources to support their children through active participation in school-home related activities and through consistent practice of family literacy methods. During the creation of this workshop, the parents were contacted and their needs were discussed. The majority of parents are interested in participating. One major concern of the parents willing to participate is the language in which the workshop will be held. It was decided, after speaking to the parents, that the two-session workshop will be held in Spanish due to their limited English proficiency. It is important to mention that the parents interested in this workshop have children in grades K-2, some with LEP, others are illiterate and most have basic understanding of technology. Finally, there are families

that are in need of solid school support and ideas of how to help their children with school related work.

In order to motivate parents to get more involved in their children's education, there are two 1-hour sessions. The first session is a motivational session about the importance of parental involvement for student success. Waterman (2008) stated that parent involvement should emphasize home-school collaboration, thus operating with an approach that diminishes distance between the home and the schools and creates the space for an alternative that promotes mutual and equitable responsibility and exchange. It is crucial for parents to visualize the importance of getting involved with their children's school and the multiple benefits active involvement has. Other important aspects to review are ways of creating trust relationships with school administrators and teachers. In this first session, ESL terminology will also be discussed, and the current ESL education statistics in the United States will give parents an overview. During the workshop parents will have access to iPads, Chromebooks, and expert help to assist them in navigating the internet, creating and using emails, and exploring the school's website. At the end of the workshop, parents will have the opportunity to voice their questions and concerns. Those parents that want to provide feedback and require further explanation are encouraged to record their questions through a voice app using the iPad or write their questions on paper.

In the second session, and after parents have had the opportunity to use the apps in their phones, personal computers, and tablets they are shown the different platforms that the teachers use to communicate with parents. SeeSaw and ClassDojo are two platforms commonly used by teachers at our school. During the workshop parents will download the applications and will be guided through the different options they can use to communicate with the teacher and administrators. Both applications allow messages through texting and recorded voice messages

to facilitate communication between parents and teachers. Once they are familiar with these resources, they are instructed on how to use their native language to aid and promote literacy development at home. Children and parents can read dual/bi-/multilingual books, with multimodal texts, pictures, and illustrations, and tell stories in the majority and home languages, and create their linguistic and cultural identities (Cummins 2004, 2009; Naqvi et al., 2012; Taylor et al., 2008 as cited in Karpava, 2021). For Latinos, families are close-knit and valuable; therefore, the closure activity of the workshop contains ideas that will promote community bonds among participants and allow them to share their experiences openly with one another.

Chapter 4: The Project

The objective of this workshop is both to inform and motivate Latino parents to be active participants of their child's education and foster family literacy practices. Furthermore, the workshop can help to create a sense of community and common purpose among its participants.

This interactive two-part 1-hour session workshop in Spanish is supported by a PowerPoint presentation (See Appendix A: Slides). The workshop is composed of two phases. The first phase aims to highlight the benefits of parental involvement. The objective of the second phase is an overview of the technological tools that can help foster family literacy.

First Session

The use of abbreviations related to ESL can become confusing and overwhelming. In order to provide clarity in the use of English as a second language terminology, the presentation begins with a review of key words and concepts. (See also Slide # 2 in Appendix A)

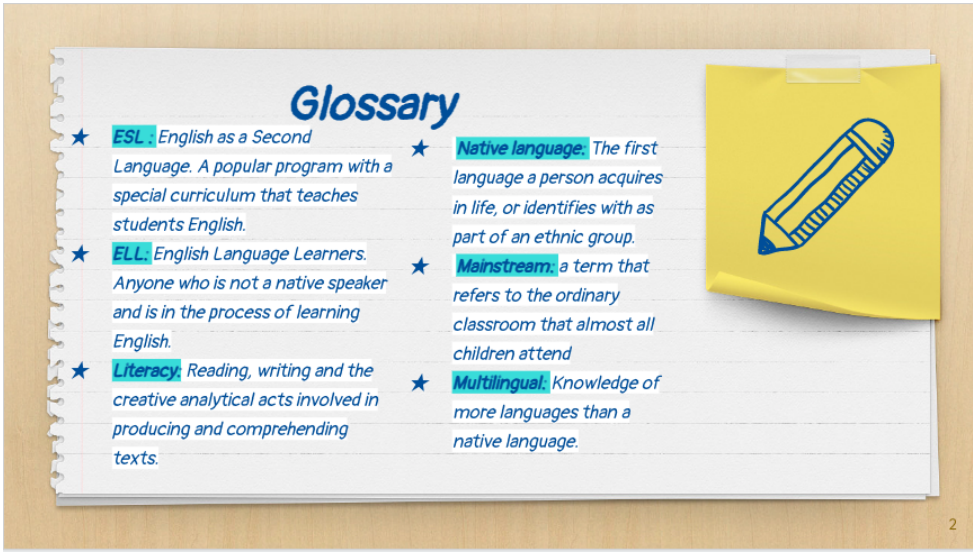

Glossary
ESL : English as a Second Language. A popular program with a special curriculum that teaches students English.
ELL: English Language Learners. Anyone who is not a native speaker and is in the process of learning English.
Literacy: Reading, writing and the creative analytical acts involved in producing and comprehending texts.
Native language: The first language a person acquires in life, or identifies with as part of an ethnic group.
Mainstream: a term that refers to the ordinary classroom that almost all children attend
Multilingual: Knowledge of more languages than a native language.
2

Figure 4.2: Glossary

Subsequently, data concerning ESL education in the United States is presented. The data shows the growth of the ESL population throughout the years. The purpose of this information is to allow parents to visualize that although education in the United States differs from education in their own countries, our language and culture are making an impact. The data also provides an overview of the impact of being multilingual and the time that children spend at home with their families. (See also Slide # 3 in Appendix A)

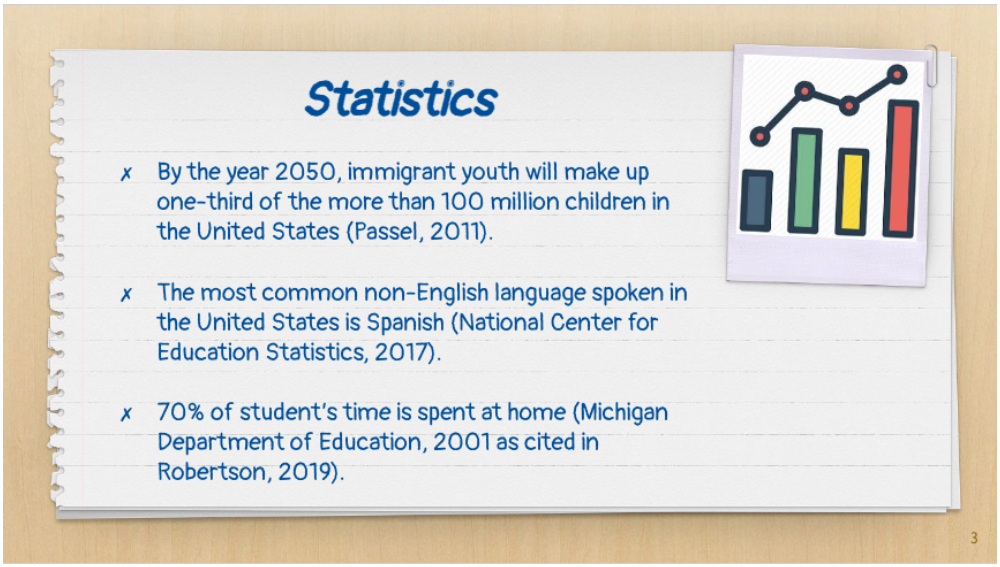

Statistics
By the year 2050, immigrant youth will make up one-third of the more than 100 million children in the United States (Passel, 2011).
The most common non-English language spoken in the United States is Spanish (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017).
70% of student's time is spent at home (Michigan Department of Education, 2001 as cited in Robertson, 2019).
3

Figure 4.3: Statistics

During this first phase of the workshop, parents will also learn how important it is for them to be active participants in their child's education. Parental involvement emerged in the 1900s as a major issue in public schooling. There are several conceptualized dimensions of parental involvement; nevertheless, the goals and benefits are common among these dimensions.

According to Epstein (1992), the following are models of parental involvement and ideas on how to get involved. (See also Slide # 4 in Appendix A)

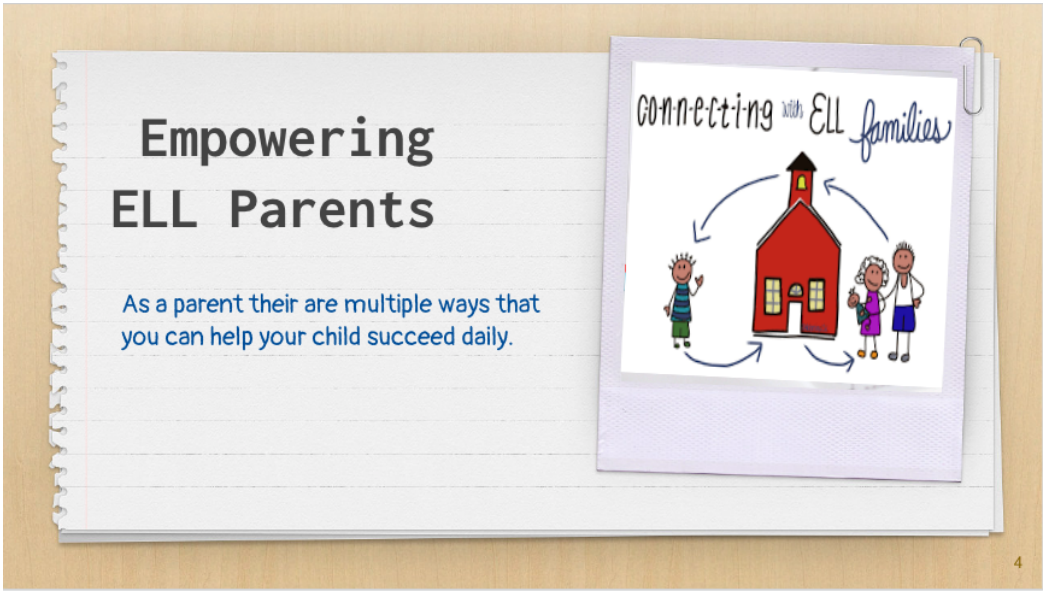

Empowering
ELL Parents
As a parent their are multiple ways that you can help your child succeed daily.
connecting with ELL families
4

Figure 4.4: Empowering ELL Parents

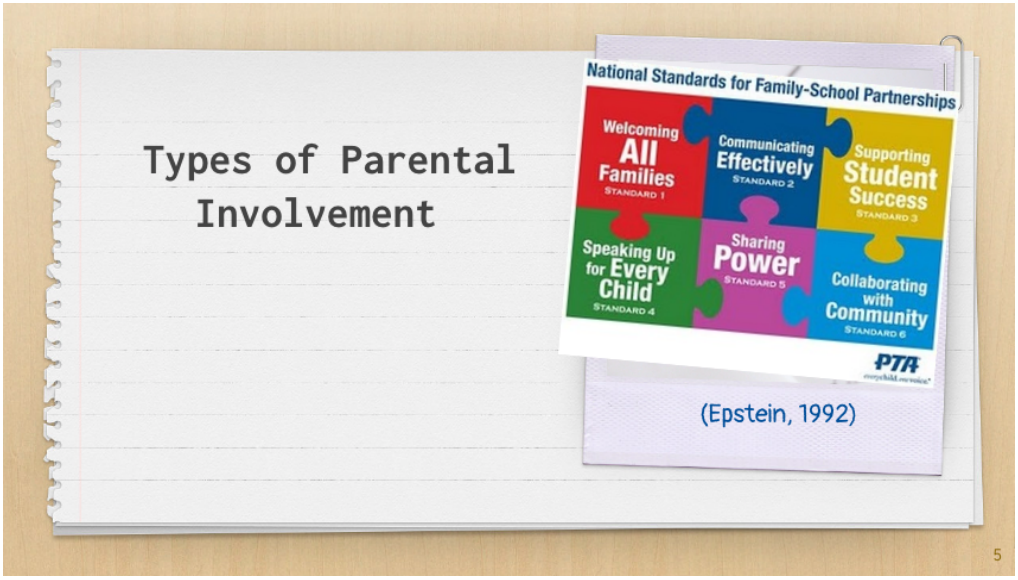


Figure 4.5: Epstein's Model

Epstein's (1992) views about parental involvement are focused mainly on what the school and the teachers can do to promote effective and constant involvement. (See also Slide # 5 in Appendix A)

Get involved
✗ Get your children on time to school every day.
✗ Read with your child daily.
✗ Take a trip to the library.
✗ Sing songs and tell stories with your child.
✗ Communicate with your child's teachers regularly.
✗ Get involved in school activities.
(Karther and Lowden, 1997)
6

Figure 4.6: Getting Involved

Karther and Lowden's (1997) views about parental involvement are focused mainly on what parents can do to promote effective and constant involvement. (See also Slide #6 in Appendix A)

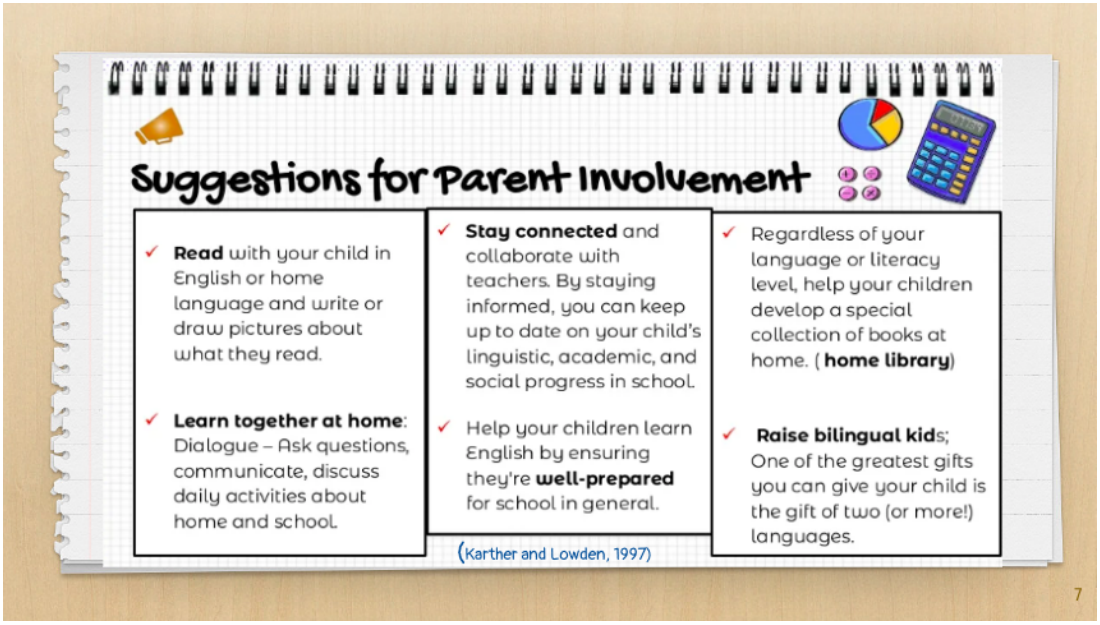

Suggestions for Parent Involvement
Read with your child in English or home language and write or draw pictures about what they read.
Learn together at home: Dialogue – Ask questions, communicate, discuss daily activities about home and school.
Stay connected and collaborate with teachers. By staying informed, you can keep up to date on your child's linguistic, academic, and social progress in school.
Help your children learn English by ensuring they're well-prepared for school in general.
(Karther and Lowden, 1997)
Regardless of your language or literacy level, help your children develop a special collection of books at home. (home library)
Raise bilingual kids; One of the greatest gifts you can give your child is the gift of two (or more!) languages.
7

Figure 4.7: Suggestions for Parent Involvement

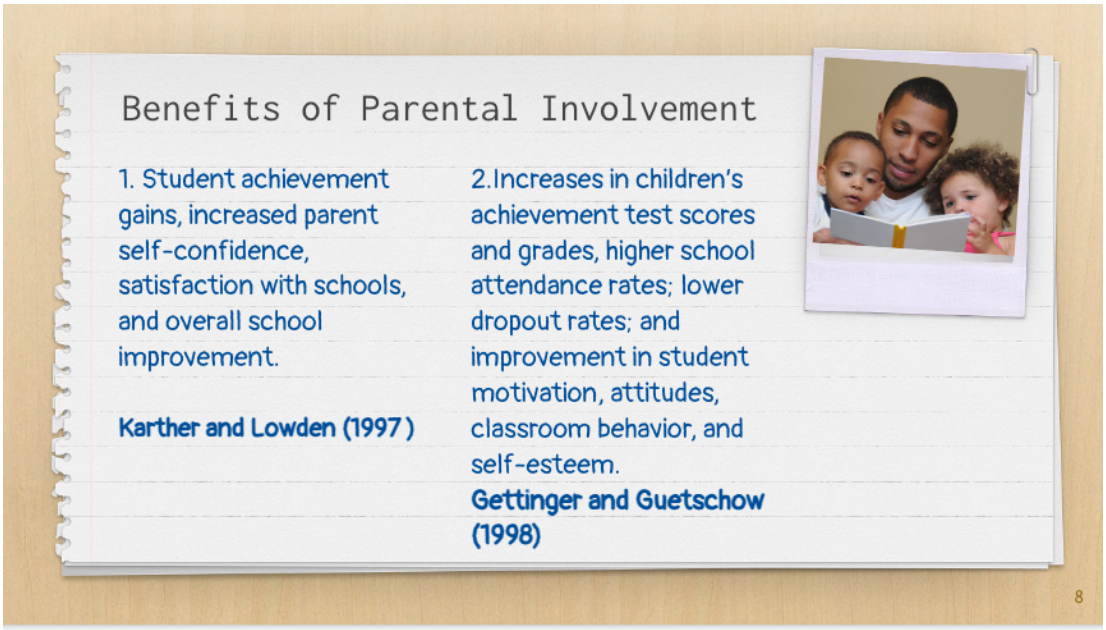

Benefits of Parental Involvement
1. Student achievement gains, increased parent self-confidence, satisfaction with schools, and overall school improvement.
Karther and Lowden (1997)
2.Increases in children's achievement test scores and grades, higher school attendance rates; lower dropout rates; and improvement in student motivation, attitudes, classroom behavior, and self-esteem.
Gettinger and Guetschow (1998)
8

Figure 4.8: The benefits of Parental Involvement

Second Session

In the second session, and after parents have had the opportunity to use the apps in their phones, personal computers, and tablets they are shown the different platforms that the teachers use to communicate with parents. SeeSaw and ClassDojo are two platforms commonly used by teachers at our school. During the workshop parents will download the applications and will be guided through the different options they can use to communicate with the teacher and administrators. Both applications allow messages through texting and recorded voice messages to facilitate communication between parents and teachers. (See also Slide # 9 in Appendix A)

Figure 4.9: Overcoming Technology Barriers

Figure 4.10: Tools

Figure 4.11: Family Literacy

Young children begin to learn literacy before they go through formal schooling and parents are a child's first teachers and the foundations of family literacy. Not only does the family determine the child's early language, but a family's culture, beliefs and traditions also influence the way children use words for discourse (Heath, 1983 as cited in Wasik, 2012). The context young children are brought up with also shapes their literacy development and influences the field of early literacy. (See also Slide # 12 in Appendix A)

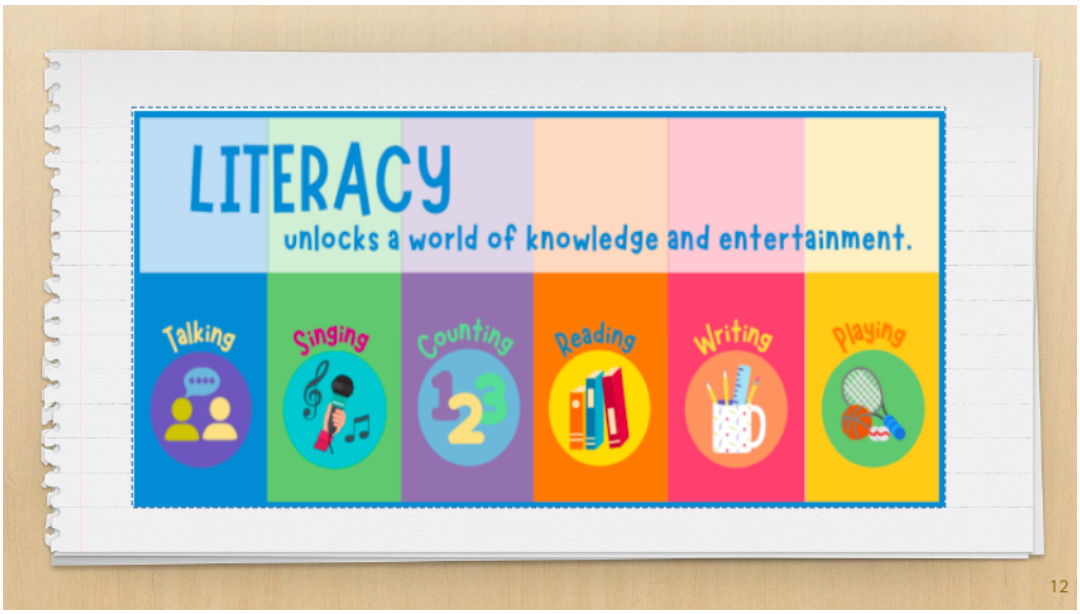


Figure 4.12: Literacy: More Than Reading and Writing

Literacy not only involves reading and writing at a young age, it also requires talking, singing, counting, and playing with your children in your native language. (See also Slide # 12 in Appendix A)

Speak to your child in your home language.
Tell your child about the benefits of being bilingual.
Share stories and songs from your culture.
Promoting Family Literacy
(Wasik, 2012)
13

Figure 4.13: Ideas to Promote Family Literacy

Encourage your child to write every day.
Talk with your children about their day.
Listen to your child read out loud.
Promoting Family Literacy
(Wasik, 2012)
14

Figure 4.14: Ideas to Promote Family Literacy

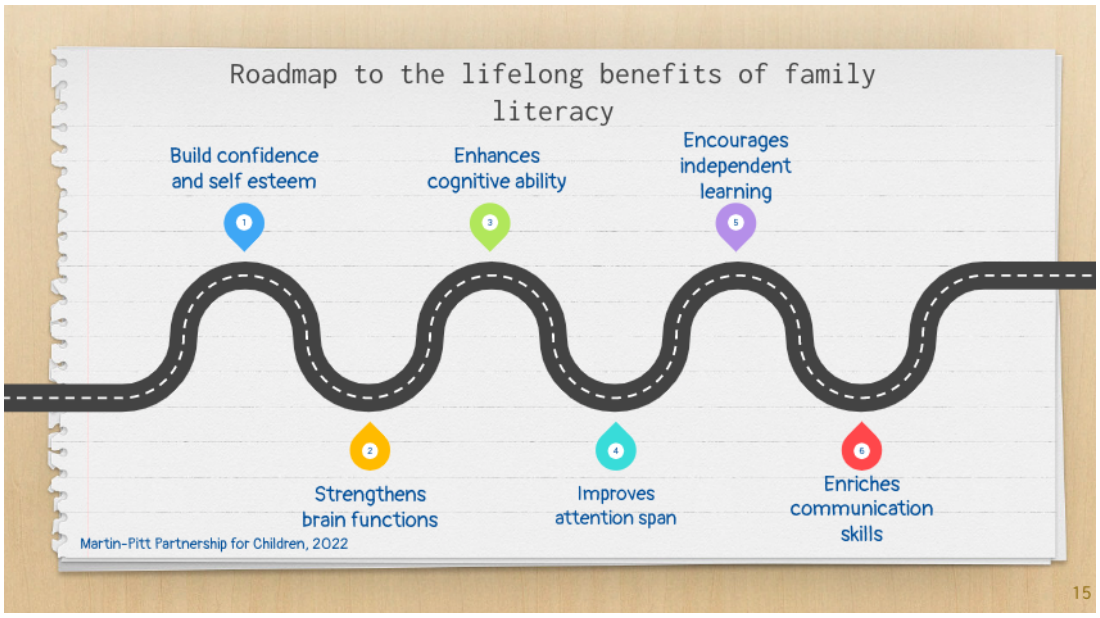


Figure 4.15: Roadmap to the Lifelong Benefits of Family Literacy

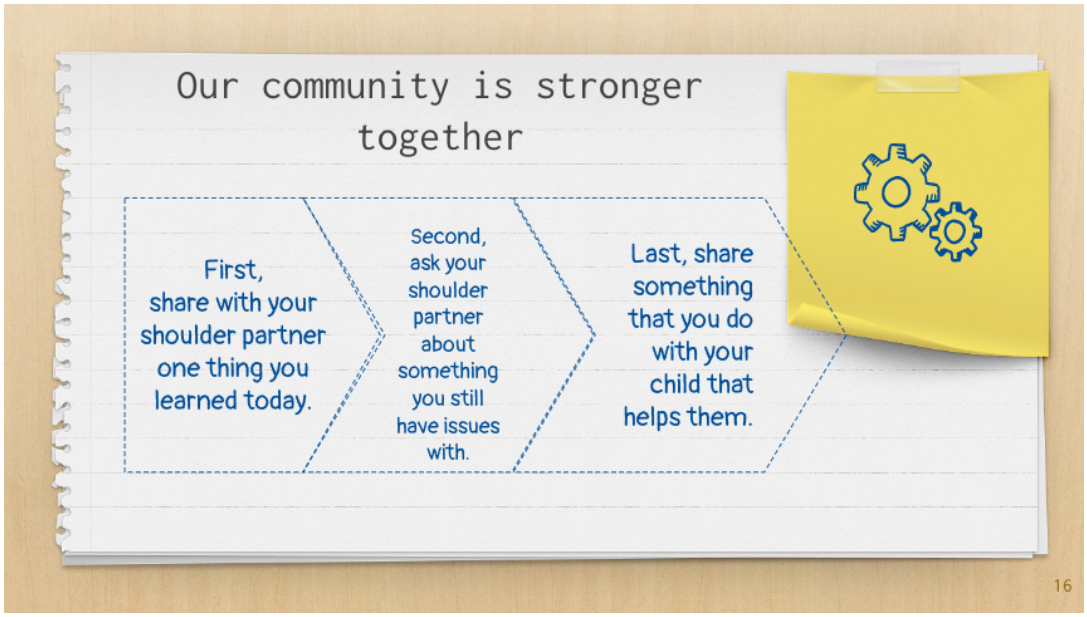

Our community is stronger together
First, share with your shoulder partner one thing you learned today.
Second, ask your shoulder partner about something you still have issues with.
Last, share something that you do with your child that helps them.
16

Figure 4.16: Creating Community Bonds

To conclude this second session of the parent workshop, participants engage in an icebreaking activity. Family is an integral component for Hispanics, therefore; it is important that they form partnerships with other families to support each other. (See also Slide # 16 in Appendix A)

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The research for this project helped me understand more about the fundamental role of parents in their children's development. Growing up, I was exposed to literacy at a very young age. My parents provided me with the tools and the time, so I could develop a curiosity for reading and writing. They also provided me with the opportunities to develop both socially and physically, allowing me to join clubs and to practice the sports of my choice. I was also introduced to acting and singing at a very young age through community performances. I also learned English at a young age through immersion. All these activities and the support of my parents and former teachers allowed me to develop a deep sense of literacy that I later carried to the classroom when I became a teacher.

Teaching in my native language (Spanish) has provided me with different learning opportunities here in the United States. One of those learning experiences is being able to teach Spanish as a second language as opposed to what I did in my home country for twenty-four years, teaching English as a second language. I have first-hand information of the differences and similarities of teaching both English and Spanish as a second language. Both my childhood and my teaching experiences have influenced my career.

Four years ago, when I first arrived at my school here in North Carolina, I immediately noticed the need for effective communication between teachers and administrators with Latino families and their students. I often volunteer as an interpreter for parent-teacher conferences and every other time teachers or administrators need to communicate with parents with low English proficiency. The most common comment from teachers, when the meetings were unsuccessful,

was that parents were not interested in getting involved in their children's education. Later, as I spoke to the Latino families, I understood that one of the main reasons for not getting involved was the language barrier.

Currently, I am not an ESL teacher in my school; however, I am an advocate of Latino families and their children. I am aware that family is crucial for Latinos and by providing the tools for effective engagement they can become active participants in their children's education. The experience and knowledge acquired through this MA in TESOL program led me to prepare this parent workshop for Latino immigrant families to promote parental involvement and family literacy despite any language barrier. After much thought and based on the needs of the Latino population in our school, I decided to focus this research on early literacy stages. After prior authorization from the school's administrators, I was able to contact parents in the Kindergarten through 2nd grade classes via phone to get a list of needs and ways to support them. Based on parents' responses, I began to classify the different subtopics for the theoretical framework to begin my research.

After becoming more familiar with the theories that support this project-based research, I began the preparation of these two, one-hour sessions for the parent workshop. The first session gave parents an overview of parental involvement as well statistics of ESL students in the United States. Subsequently, in the second session parents were able to go over the different technological tools used in school by their children's teachers as well as learning about the implications of family literacy, especially at a young age. Positive outcomes from this parent session will allow me to expand this parent workshop to the parents of Latino families who have students in grades 3-5.

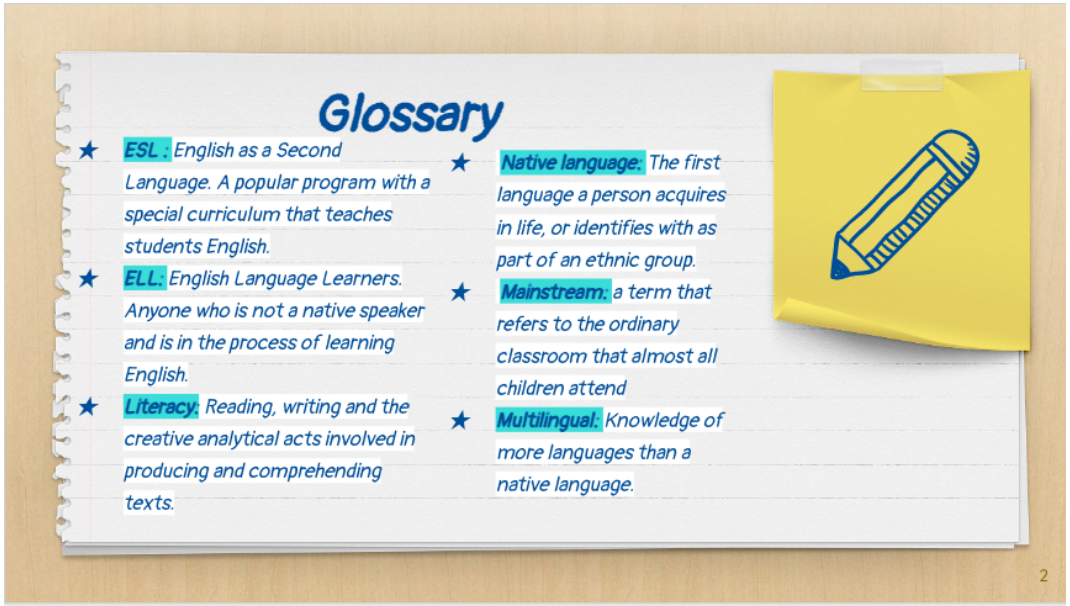
My short-term goal is to become a certified ESL teacher to continue to be an advocate for students who are learning English as a second language. The fact that I learned English as a second language in my country, and then taught English as a second language for 24 years, motivates me to continue in the journey to help as many children and adults as I can.

Beyond the development of this thesis, this master's program has allowed me to interact positively with other educators from different parts of the world. It has also provided me with opportunities to apply skills learned throughout the different classes in my own dual language classroom. Furthermore, the development of this thesis will help build stronger school-home relationships with our Latino families enabling more positive and productive parent engagement. These stronger school-home connections will also set path to stronger family literacy practices in both English and Spanish.

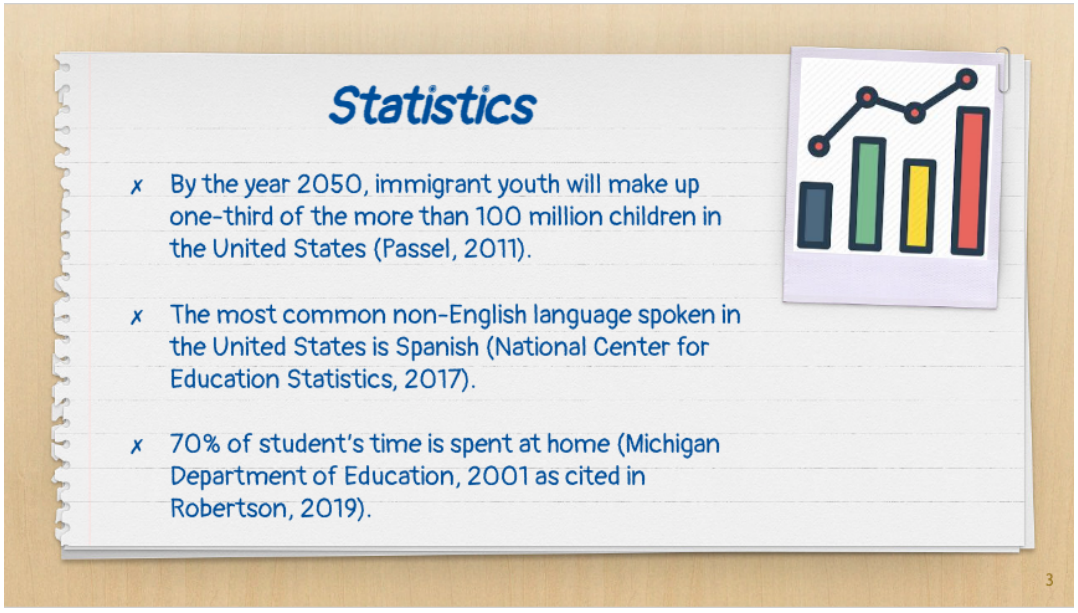
Appendix A: Google Slideshow Presentation

Parent Workshop
PROMOTING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT: A ROAD TO ENHANCE FAMILY LITERACY IN LATINO FAMILIES
Flor O. Castillo
2022

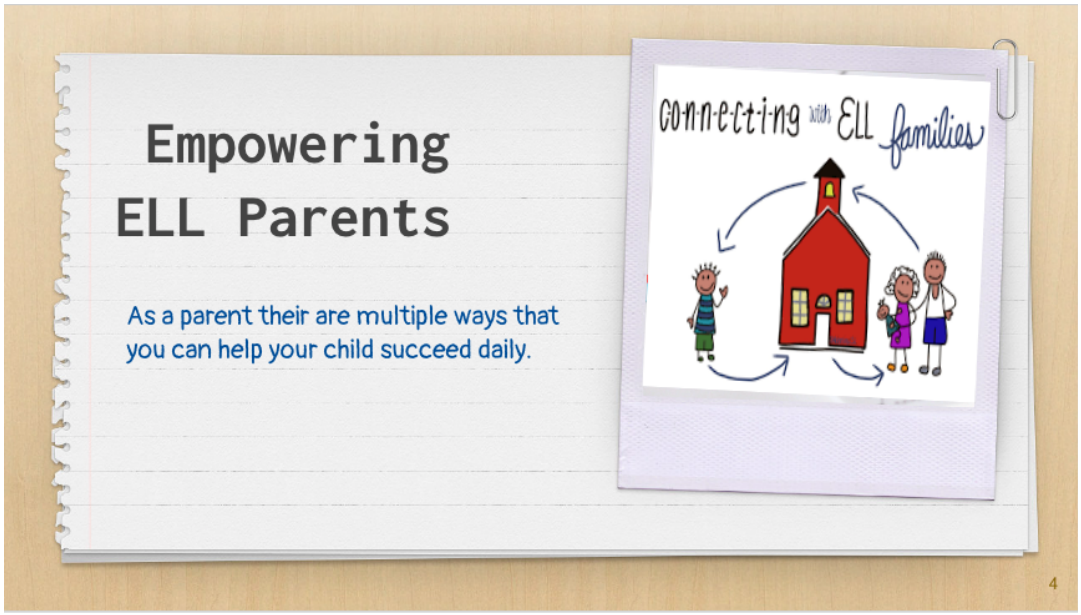
Slide #1


Glossary
ESL : English as a Second Language. A popular program with a special curriculum that teaches students English.
ELL: English Language Learners. Anyone who is not a native speaker and is in the process of learning English.
Literacy: Reading, writing and the creative analytical acts involved in producing and comprehending texts.
Native language: The first language a person acquires in life, or identifies with as part of an ethnic group.
Mainstream: a term that refers to the ordinary classroom that almost all children attend
Multilingual: Knowledge of more languages than a native language.
2

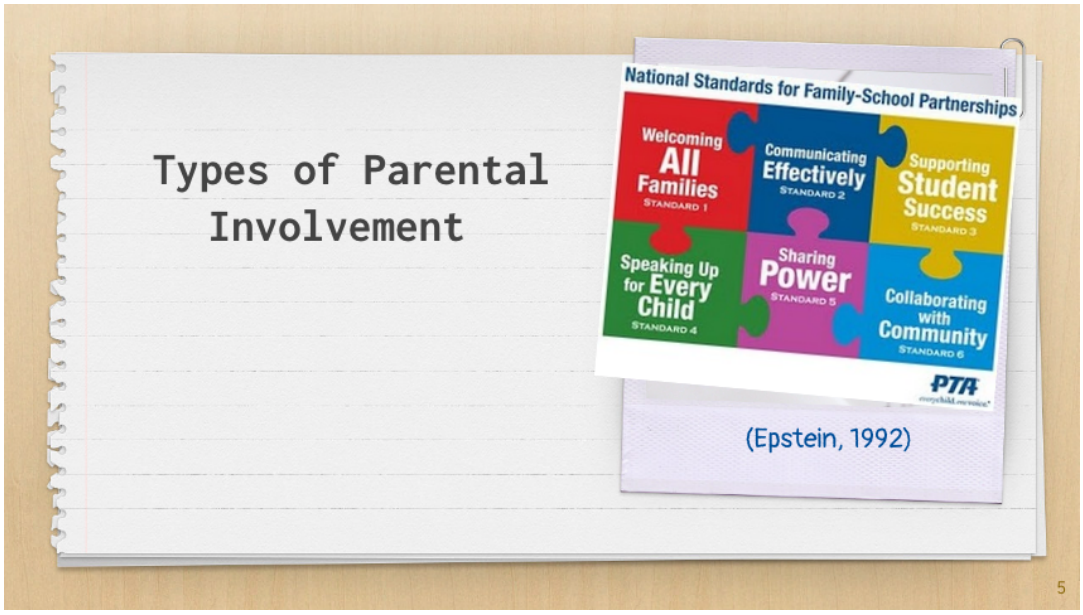
Slide #2


Statistics
By the year 2050, immigrant youth will make up one-third of the more than 100 million children in the United States (Passel, 2011).
The most common non-English language spoken in the United States is Spanish (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017).
70% of student's time is spent at home (Michigan Department of Education, 2001 as cited in Robertson, 2019).
3

Slide #3


Empowering ELL Parents
As a parent their are multiple ways that you can help your child succeed daily.
connecting with ELL families
4

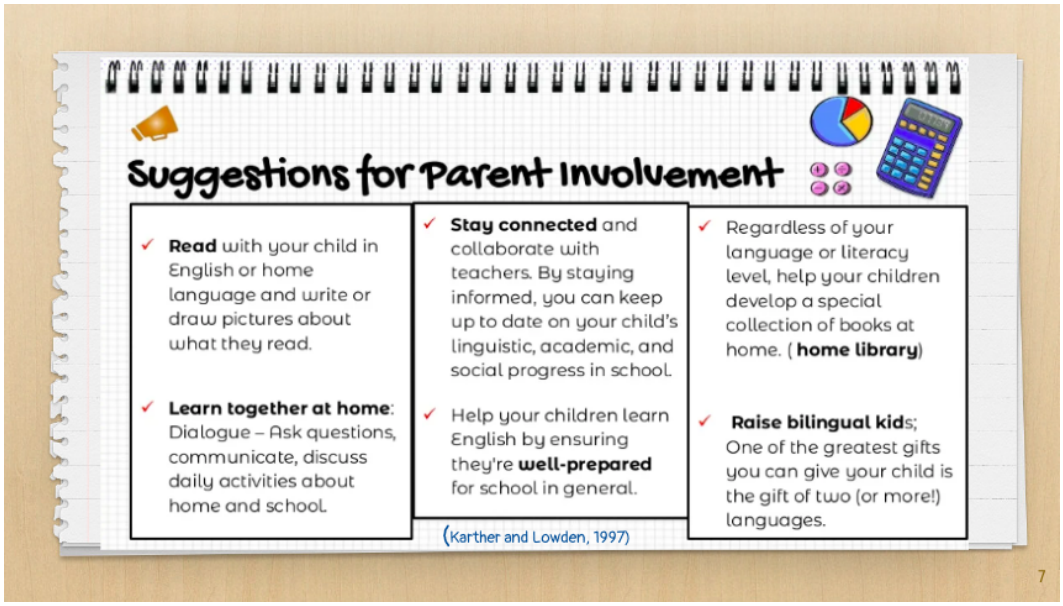
Slide #4



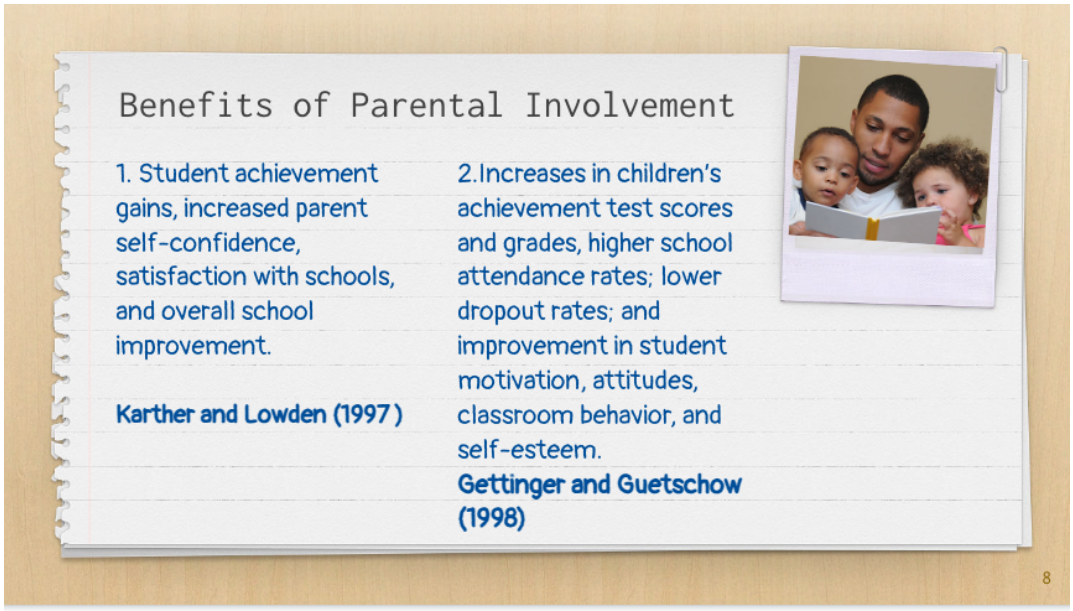
Slide #5

Get involved
✗ Get your children on time to school every day.
✗ Read with your child daily.
✗ Take a trip to the library.
✗ Sing songs and tell stories with your child.
✗ Communicate with your child's teachers regularly.
✗ Get involved in school activities.
(Karther and Lowden, 1997)
6

Slide #6


Suggestions for Parent Involvement
Read with your child in English or home language and write or draw pictures about what they read.
Learn together at home: Dialogue – Ask questions, communicate, discuss daily activities about home and school.
Stay connected and collaborate with teachers. By staying informed, you can keep up to date on your child's linguistic, academic, and social progress in school.
Help your children learn English by ensuring they're well-prepared for school in general.
(Karther and Lowden, 1997)
Regardless of your language or literacy level, help your children develop a special collection of books at home. (home library)
Raise bilingual kids; One of the greatest gifts you can give your child is the gift of two (or more!) languages.
7

Slide #7

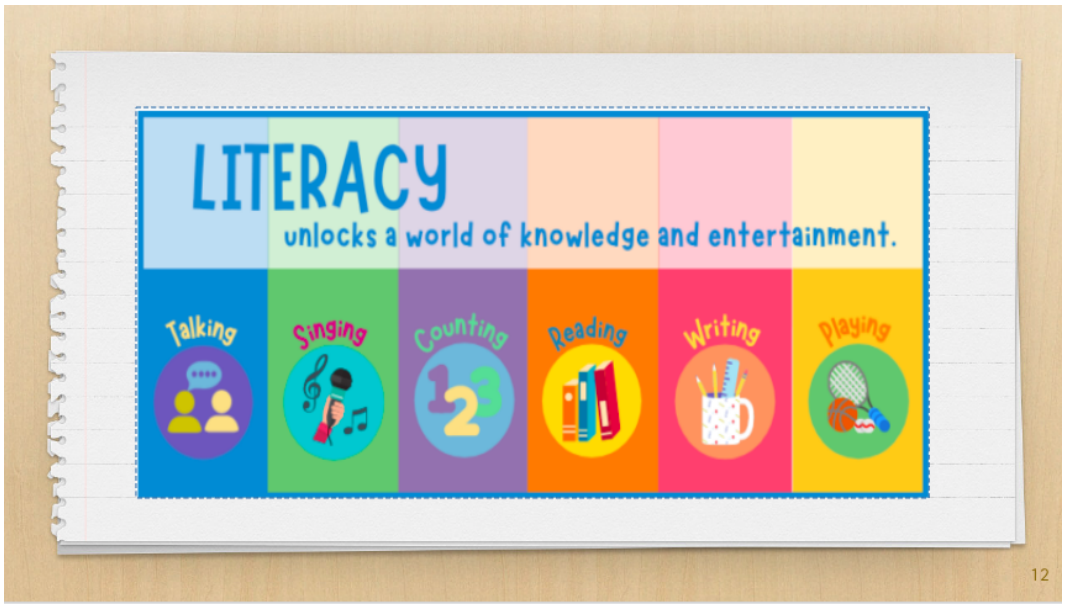

Benefits of Parental Involvement
1. Student achievement gains, increased parent self-confidence, satisfaction with schools, and overall school improvement.
Karther and Lowden (1997)
2.Increases in children's achievement test scores and grades, higher school attendance rates; lower dropout rates; and improvement in student motivation, attitudes, classroom behavior, and self-esteem.
Gettinger and Guetschow (1998)
8

Slide #8

Slide #9

Slide #10

Slide #11



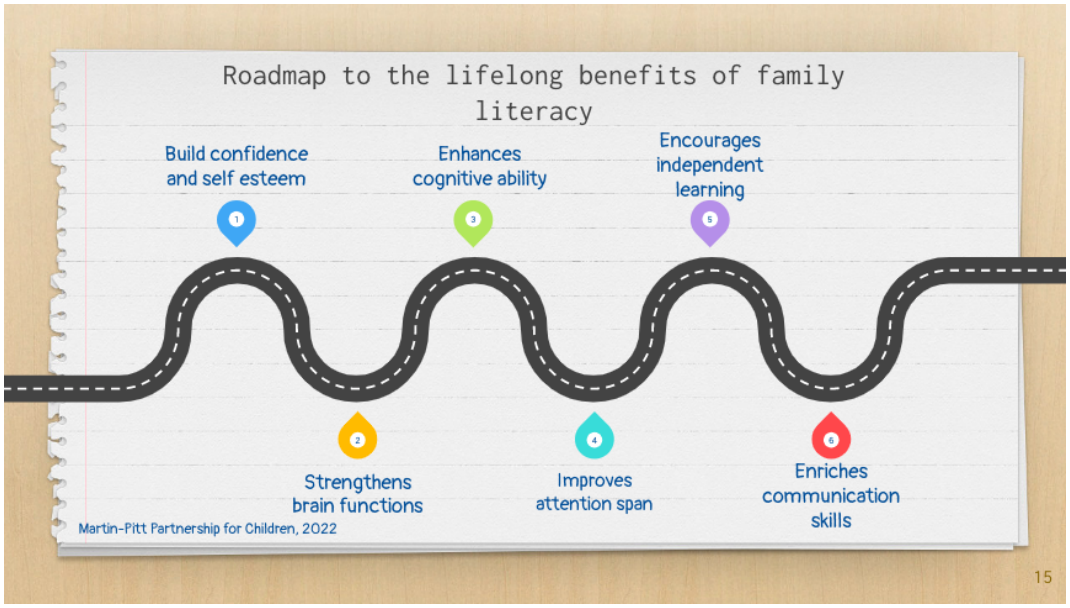
Slide #12

Speak to your child in your home language.
Tell your child about the benefits of being bilingual.
Share stories and songs from your culture.
Promoting Family Literacy (Wasik, 2012)
13

Slide #13

Encourage your child to write every day.
Talk with your children about their day.
Listen to your child read out loud.
Promoting Family Literacy (Wasik, 2012)
14

Slide #14



Slide #15

Our community is stronger together
First, share with your shoulder partner one thing you learned today.
Second, ask your shoulder partner about something you still have issues with.
Last, share something that you do with your child that helps them.
16

Slide #16

Thanks!
Any questions?
You can find me at:
flor.castillo@greensboro.edu
17

Slide #17

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